

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE CABINET**

**TUESDAY 3RD MAY 2022, AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), G. N. Denaro (Deputy Leader), M. A. Sherrey, P.L. Thomas, M. Thompson and S. A. Webb

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks (on Micorsoft Teams), Mrs. S. Hanley (on Micorsoft Teams), Mr J. Howse, Mrs. C. Felton (on Micorsoft Teams) and Mr P. Carpenter and Mrs. J. Gresham

71/21 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

72/21 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

73/21 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 30TH MARCH 2022**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2022 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2022 be approved as a true and correct record.

74/21 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 28TH MARCH 2022**

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Councillor C. Hotham, presented the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022, and in doing so the Cabinet was informed that since the meeting of the Board things had moved forward and that items had been discussed and agreed.

It was confirmed by the Chairman that the Land Drainage Maintenance report that was presented by officers at this meeting had been positively received by Members. In addition to this, it was reported that Members had been encouraged by the Equality Annual Update, which had

highlighted the huge amount of work being undertaken in this area. It was confirmed that during the Planning Determination Timescales item presented by the Head of Planning, Leisure and Regeneration, the Board were informed that determination timescales were on target.

The Chairman informed Cabinet that at the last meeting of the Board a Fuel Poverty Task Group had been initiated and the investigation would start in the new municipal year. Members queried the establishment of this task group, and it was confirmed by Councillor C. Hotham that it was hoped that the outcome of the investigation would provide information on provision and signposting for those residents in the District who were most in need of support in respect of fuel poverty.

During consideration of this item, it was also noted that there was one recommendation made by the Overview and Scrutiny Board at its meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2022 in respect of the Fireworks Motion. The recommendation was as follows:

The Overview and Scrutiny Board

RECOMMENDED to CABINET

*'that Bromsgrove District Council encourages residents to attend professionally organised firework displays and, in private settings, encourages the use of low noise or visual fireworks only.'*

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board confirmed that this recommendation had been proposed in order to help mitigate the distressing and sometimes extreme effects of fireworks on animals and vulnerable people within the District. Although there was agreement that the effects on animals and vulnerable people were upsetting it was highlighted that there was already legislation in place to monitor the use of fireworks and to 'encourage' residents might prove difficult and further clarification was needed in order to understand what the Board's expectation would be in carrying out the recommendation.

Members discussed the possibility of running a social media campaign regarding the use of the fireworks and Cabinet were satisfied that this would be the best way forward. It was with this in mind that an amendment to the recommendation was proposed as follows:

*'that Bromsgrove District Council, through its social media and other channels, encourages its residents to attend professionally organised*

*firework displays and, in private settings, encourages the use of low noise or visual fireworks only.'*

On being put to the vote this was carried.

**RESOLVED** that

- (i) the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022, be noted;
- (ii) Bromsgrove District Council, through its social media and other channels, encourage its residents to attend professionally organised firework displays and, in private settings, encourages the use of low noise or visual fireworks only.

75/21

**TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Interim Head of Finance and Customer Services (Deputy S151) presented the Treasury Management Strategy for Cabinet's consideration.

It was reported to Members that it was a statutory requirement to set the Treasury Management Strategy each financial year and have at least a half yearly update and outturn report. The Council reports progress on a quarterly basis as part of the Quarterly Monitoring Report.

The Interim Head of Finance and Customer Services (Deputy S151) took Members through the report, which included the Capital Strategy 2022/23, Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2022/23, Policy for the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts and the Investment Strategy and highlighted a number of areas in particular, including:

- Capital expenditure on regeneration schemes including Burcot Lane and the Levelling Up Funding which the Council successfully bid for in 2021.
- The Prudential Indicators in Table 6 of Appendix A which provided information on the projected levels of the Council's gross debt compared with the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR).
- The legal obligation to set an Authorised Limit for external debt each year in addition to an Operational Boundary which was set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.
- The Treasury Management Strategy at Appendix B which highlighted how the Authority would invest in the future.

- The Council's Treasury Management Advisor, Arlingclose, would assist in identifying the most cost effective way to manage borrowing and the Councils Minimum Revenue Provision going forward.

Following the presentation of the report it was noted that local authorities must follow a proper governance process in respect of investments and ensure that a robust risk strategy was in place to deliver investments that were affordable.

The Executive Director for Resources was invited to comment on the report and in doing so explained that this was a very technical and important report that would provide a framework on how the Council could manage their investments in the future.

**RECOMMENDED that**

- (i) the Capital Strategy as an appropriate overarching strategy for the Council be approved;
- (ii) the Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/23 and the associated MRP policy be approved;
- (iii) the policy for Flexible use of Capital Receipts be approved;
- (iv) the Investment Strategy be approved.

76/21

**MONTH 11 FINANCIAL MONITORING**

The Executive Director for Resources and the Interim Head of Finance and Customer Services (Deputy S151) presented the Month 11 Financial Monitoring report. Cabinet was informed that there had not been formal reporting over the previous municipal year as capacity within the Finance team had been diverted in order to process the business grants that had been distributed as part of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it was stated that this report confirmed what officers had anticipated, that the Council was working within its budget. It was stated that the Final Outturn report would be submitted by the end of June 2022 in order to comply with the reporting timetable.

During consideration of this item the following was highlighted for Members' attention:

- There was a projected revenue underspend of £367k based on the financial period April 2021 to February 2022.
- The Capital Budget programme for the financial year 21/22 was set at £15.6m. It was further explained that only £2.7m had been spent so far as part of the programme. Officers clarified that there were reasons for the variance including the work on the Burcot Lane project, which was due to be completed by the end of the calendar year and would result in the programmed £9.3m budget being spent as allocated. In addition to this, as reported to Cabinet and Council in the 2020/21 Outturn Report, due to a slippage of schemes in the capital Programme for 2020/21, £4.3m from that year had been approved to be transferred to the 2021/22 financial year.

Members were interested as to whether the £367k underspend was as a result of vacancies within the Council. Officers confirmed that although this was the case for some of the underspend there had been other associated factors including the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on how people worked and also lack of access to raw materials that were due to be purchased in order to carry out works, which had resulted in the programme not being undertaken as planned.

Further discussion followed regarding the distribution of the remaining Covid-19 pandemic grants and whether there had been any restrictions placed on them. Officers confirmed that although there were no specific restrictions when the scheme was launched in March 2020 there were preferred areas of expenditure.

**RESOLVED that**

- (i) The forecast 2021/22 outturn position in relation to revenue budgets based on the financial period April 2021 – February 2022 is a projected revenue underspend of £367k.
- (ii) Capital expenditure to date is £2.7m against a total an approved programme of £15.3m

The meeting closed at 6.35 p.m.

Chairman